**CHAIN MANAGEMENT**

The typical line-to-gain (chain) crew consists of at least three individuals – a down-box operator and two to hold the rods. Unless otherwise possible by the use of a fourth crew member, the down-box operator will attach the clip as specified.

PRE-GAME DUTIES

1. The chain crew shall meet with the *HEAD* *LINESMAN* on the sideline opposite the press box at least 15 minutes before game time and five minutes prior to the second-half kickoff
2. The *HEAD* *LINESMAN* shall make certain that the chain and the official down box have been placed opposite the press box or the designated sideline and that all are in good working order and conform to the rules
3. The crew must refrain from showing any partisan reaction to the events taking place on the playing field. The crew must be prepared to act immediately on instructions from the *HEAD* *LINESMAN* so that teams will know the exact situation concerning the down and yards to be gained. The crew shall not move or change the number of the down until signaled to do so by the *HEAD* *LINESMAN*

## **CHAIN CREW INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Once all members are present, have the chain crew take all of the equipment to the 10 or 15-yard line, opposite the press box, before beginning your instructions. Moving the chain crew away from the visiting team box will help them focus on your instructions
2. Determine who will be working the down indicator, the chains, and the clip (if you have a 4th person)
3. Ask who will be doing the box. Introduce yourself to the “chains” first, then to the “box-man”. It is important to know the names of the chain crew members, especially the first name of the “box-man.” Introducing yourself last to the ‘box-man” will help you in remembering his/her name
4. Be consistent with your chain crew instructions, even if the chain crew tells you they have been doing it for a long time
5. Let them know the REFEREE (“White Hat”) is in charge. We always wait for and follow his instructions
6. Don’t get hurt! Instruct them to always drop the equipment and retreat backward and up-field, against the grain, to escape the players' forward momentum. Moving straight backward or down-field, in the direction of the forward stake, may not be enough to escape the player’s momentum in that direction. We can always reset the equipment! In almost all cases, one of the members holding a stake will be able to remain in place because he/she is not threatened. This makes resetting the chains quite easy and accurate
7. “Do Not Move until I motion or tell you to move”. Then when instructed to move, you must hustle to the new spot. Instruct and demonstrate your hand signals for “box-only” and “all move”. One suggestion is to signal for the whole crew to move by waving two-three times towards your head. Instruct the crew that we must always wait for the REFEREE to give us his signal to move first. Then, you will repeat the signal to the chain crew by waving two-three times toward your head for the whole crew to move and reset (usually a first down). Show them how you will move to the sideline, or two yards beyond the sideline, to mark with your heal where they are to set up for the first down
8. Next, you will move 4-5 yards ahead of the 1st down stake, and walk out onto the field of play and show the next down on my hand, then proclaim in a loud voice, “Second Down, <first name of box-man>.” Then show the box-man how you want the box moved and positioned at the foremost point of the ball. Tell the box man (by the first name) to “walk, flip and stick”. Repeat the phrase “walk, flip and stick” so as to create a memorized, approved sequence for the box-man. Another common teaching phrase is to instruct the box-man to have the “old down” at the old spot and the “new down” at the new spot. This ensures that the referee and crew will see the old down still indicated prior to moving, just in case we see a flag and stop the box-man from moving. Then, once the box-man is signaled to move to the new spot, when he/she arrives, the new down will be displayed
9. The next set of instructions explains to the chain crew how to set up for 1st downs. Again, demonstrate the “all move” signal while you move out of bounds to where you will want the chains to set up (two yards out of bounds at the outside of the solid white area or dotted restraining line for teams and/or spectators). Demonstrate how you will face the field and then lift your heel on your downfield foot to indicate exactly where you want them to set up for the new series of downs. Show the chain crew how the front stake moves downfield beyond your heal so as to set up the new line-to-gain. The trailing stake then comes in and joins the box-man who has already placed to box at the heel of the head linesman. Once the rear stake is set, the front stake is pulled and extended fully before being set. Finally, show them how the stake-man holds the box as the box-man moves the clip from the old spot to the new, nearest 5-yard line stripe
10. Explain when it's 1st and goal, the box is the only thing needed. The chains will be placed on the ground away from the field of play
11. Also, explain that for PAT’s, it is also a box man only situation. The box is placed at the three with a #1 on the box. There might be a need to hustle to this spot if the TD was a long scoring play. Remember, no one moves until given the proper signal by the head linesman
12. Direct the “box-man” to be behind you on every play except kick-offs. It is also preferred that the box-man verbally communicate the new down on the box to the head linesman every time the box-man “walks, flips and sticks” for the new down (including 1st downs). The box-man will announce the new down to the head linesman, and the head linesman will respond with “thank you” if you are in agreement
13. Explain to the box-man that it is important to know if we are past the tape on the chains at the 5-yard mark. If the box sets up beyond that tape, please announce the new down plus that we are “beyond the tape”. The head linesman will again answer, “thank you”
14. Emphasize that it is critically important that the chains not move on long gainers, change of possessions, or after a punt. The head linesman will wait to get the signal from the referee, then will signal with the universal signal for “all move”. Don’t be in a hurry to move, but once given the “all move” signal, hustle quickly to the new spot
15. The chain crew and box-man must be alert for any penalty flags thrown on a play. If they see a penalty flag thrown, it is critical that the chains freeze (do not move) and wait for instructions from the HEAD LINESMAN
16. If we have a measurement, the head linesman will instruct the box man first to not change the box # until instructed. The box-man will be instructed to take a position behind the forward steak and wait for the BJ to arrive at the same spot. The head linesman will hold the clip in one hand and the chain in the other after verifying the yard line that the clip is located. The head linesman and two stake-men will then jog straight out onto the field until they arrive at the location of the ball. The referee will identify for the head linesman where to spot the clip. The downfield stake-man will hand off the stake to the line judge. The other stake-man will stand slightly behind the HEAD LINESMAN and will not apply any tension on the chain. If the referee declares a 1st down, then the chain crew will return to the sideline and will set up with the help of the HEAD LINESMAN’S heel for a routine 1st down. If the ball is declared short of the line-to-gain, the referee may use the chains to move the ball accurately to the hash marks if the ball was dead in the side zone. Tell the crew to follow along with the movements of the officials as they will conduct this movement and new placement of the ball. Once the ball is declared short of the line-to gain and moved to the hash marks if necessary, the chain crew and head linesman will return to the sideline and re-set the chains as the head linesman holds the clip at the proper yard line. The chains will stretch tight in both directions as the head linesman holds the clip. OR the front stake-man places the front stake at the spot being held by the box-man, and the rear stake-man pulls the chains tight. In either procedure, the chains are re-positioned exactly where they were before the measurement. Finally, the box-man is provided the new down, and he “walks, flips and sticks” the box at the forward spot of the ball. If time permits, walk the chain crew out on the field and practice a measurement
17. Explain in detail how, at the end of the 1st and 3rd quarters, the chain crew will wait until the head linesman writes down info and waits for the referee and umpire to do the same. Once the referee signals us to move, I will confirm with the box-man the yard line we’re on. The box-man will be instructed to go that same yard line on the other side of the 50. I will then ask the stake-men what yard line they are on because that’s where they will need to be on the other side of the 50. After verifying the clip and yard line is correct, the head linesman will grab the clip in one hand and chain in the other and rise. Demonstrate how the crew will be flipped before starting to jog to the other side of the 50. Show how you will grab the clip with your back to the press box and have the downfield stake-man go in front of you and lead the chain crew down the field. Together we will jog to the new location of the clip. The forward stake-man will continue beyond the spot for the clip. Box sakes will stretch when instructed to do so, and the box-man’s position will be confirmed by the HEAD LINESMAN
18. Explain that if for some reason play is delayed or interrupted, they will need to stay with you until a solution is presented or play is continued
19. Tell the chain crew that they are an important part of tonight’s officiating crew. As such, they are allowed to come out on the field of play if needed to get through or around the team box area. If their duties are interrupted or the sidelines become too crowded, the chain crew is to notify the head linesman immediately so corrections can be made
20. Finally, your concentration and focus are necessary so we don’t make any mistakes, so cell phone use is prohibited, and communication with players or coaches is absolutely not allowed
21. Ask the crew if they have any questions? The chain crew instructions should take no more than 8-11 minutes